

## **A PROPER SEEKING OF DIVINE FAVOR.**

– 2 SAM. 6:1-12. – *OCTOBER 4.* –

**"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house." – Psa. 84:4.**

AFTER David had been voluntarily chosen king of all the tribes of Israel, not as a result of his conquest, but as a result of his patient waiting for the Lord's time to put him into the position of king, he took possession of Jerusalem and made it the capital city of the kingdom. Then followed wars with the Philistines, who again sought to invade the land of Israel. In these wars, under the Lord's blessing, the Israelites were successful. It was after seven years had passed under such conditions – after the kingdom of Israel had become quite settled, and was not likely to be molested by enemies – that the scene of this lesson opens. King David, at this time about forty-four years of age, recognized the fact that religious matters had been at a low ebb in the nation for many years, and that the Lord having now blessed them by reuniting them and giving them peace, an appropriate time had come to do what he could in the way of reviving the religious sentiments of the people. His own heart ever loyal to the Lord, he desired that others should more fully appreciate the Lord as their light and their salvation. So it is with all who truly reverence the Lord and trust in him; they are desirous of telling their joys abroad, and helping others into the same condition of peace and rest in the Lord.

The Ark of the Covenant, it will be remembered, was the chief article of furniture in the Tabernacle service which the Lord instituted at the hand of Moses in the wilderness. We have no certain knowledge of the regularity of the Tabernacle worship during the period from Joshua to date. Quite probably the services were maintained with more or less regularity. It is possible that since the Ark was the chief center of interest in connection with that service, its movements, etc., may have included the movement of the other

articles of furniture of the Tabernacle, its boards, curtains, lamp, table, altars, etc.

Shortly after Israel entered Palestine Joshua located the Ark at Shiloh, twenty miles north of Jerusalem. (Josh. 18:1.) That it was still there at the close of the period of the Judges, and while Samuel lived with Eli, is shown by 1 Sam. 1:3. The sons of Eli took the Ark with them into battle against the Philistines, thus evidencing their faith in the divine institutions, although their lives were corrupt; but as a result of this misuse of the Ark, the Lord permitted it to be captured by the Philistines. However, while they possessed it a curse seemed to accompany it. In the temple of their god, Dagon, his image fell down before the Ark, and the people of the cities in which it was located were afflicted with plagues. The Philistines were glad to get rid of the Ark, and loading it upon a cart **[R3252 : page 378]** started the oxen in the direction of the Israelites. From the time of its return the Ark was in the custody of Abinadab, the priest, and his sons, one of whom was Uzzah. The Ark had thus been with the house of Abinadab in the hill Gibeah and Kirjath-jearim, otherwise called Baale, seventy years.

Any religious movement amongst the Jews must necessarily center in and about the Ark of the Covenant, for it was the symbol of the Lord's presence and of his mercy and grace toward them as a people. We remember that when in its place in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle a bright light, called the Shekinah glory, represented the Lord's presence between the two Cherubim of its golden lid, which lid was called the Mercy Seat, because upon it the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year, which covered the sins of that people for a year, and was repeated year by year continually, as a foreshadowing type of the blood of Christ, by which the real atonement is made. In the box under this lid or Mercy Seat was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the two Tables of the Law, symbolizing the gracious arrangements and promises of the Almighty to his people. Spiritual Israel, thank God, has inherited the realities which

were thus typified. Christ is the Ark of the Covenant. In him the Law has full satisfaction. In him is vested the priestly office, represented by Aaron's rod, and in him is provided the heavenly manna. All these things are made ours by the Mercy Seat, and we have access to and are accepted before the Mercy Seat as members of the High Priest's body, by virtue of the blood of atonement shed by our Redeemer as a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

King David realized that the Ark of the Lord, representing his presence, should be in the capital city of the nation, making it the city of the great King, and directing the minds of Israel, not only to their earthly king and his laws and regulations, but through him to the heavenly King whom he represented. To have this event notable – to arouse the religious sentiments of the whole people – the king realized that they must all to some extent participate in the movement, and hence he gathered from all quarters thirty thousand of the chief men of the nation – not only its military representatives, but the heads of the tribes. There is a good lesson here for all spiritual Israelites who have any prominence in the carrying forward of religious work. It is not sufficient that a leader, a representative, shall attempt some prominent service for the Lord and for the Truth. It is wiser, better every way, that all of the Lord's people be invited to join directly or representatively in any prominent matter connected with the Lord's service. Even in the affairs of a small congregation it will be found disadvantageous to have one person do all the speaking, all the leading, all the serving. Far better, far wiser is it, far more in harmony with the Scriptural direction, that each should endeavor to take a part in the service, and be encouraged so to do along the lines of his natural talents and in proportion as he shall be found humble, faithful and helpful.

The holy joy and rejoicing of the journey with the Ark from Kirjath-jearim toward Jerusalem was suddenly interrupted by the jolting of the cart, which Uzzah, who had it in charge, feared would

overthrow it. When he put forth his hand to steady the Ark he was smitten dead for his error. Consternation took the place of rejoicing. The thirty thousand who had come together specially to honor the Lord, and David himself also, were alarmed. Fear fell upon all, and David at once determined that this was either a mark of divine disfavor concerning the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem, or that increasingly disastrous experiences might come to him and to the city by reason of the presence of the Ark. All were in fear, and the question now was, what to do with the holy oracle. A courageous man of the tribe of Levi, Obed-edom, was willing to receive the emblem of the Lord Jehovah's presence into his premises – probably the Ark was set up with the Tabernacle, etc., in his yard or court or appropriate place.

"David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah" – not displeased with the Lord, we may be sure, from what we know of the man, for David's reverence for the Lord and his confidence in his righteous dealings are clearly manifest in all of his writings. We may properly understand this to mean, then, that David was displeased with his former determination – to take the Ark to Jerusalem; displeased that his good intentions respecting the revival of religion and the honoring of the lord had thus gone astray through a lack of particularity on his own part and on the part of the priests who had charge of the movement, in that they did not obey the direct and explicit instructions of the Lord concerning the manner in which this sacred emblem of his presence should be moved. See Num. 4:15; 7:9, where it is specified that the Ark was to be carried upon the shoulders of the Levites by poles running through certain rings arranged for the purpose. That this was David's attitude of mind is evident upon the reading of the ninth verse: "David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?" We can imagine the disappointment and chagrin, not only of David, but also of the thirty thousand representative Israelites, when they scattered to their homes, disappointed respecting their good

intentions, which apparently had not been fully approved by the Lord. **[R3252 : page 379]**

The statement that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah" is not to be understood to signify violent passion on the Lord's part, but evidently is an accommodated expression to bring down to human comprehension the fact that the Lord was displeased with the action of Uzzah, and thought proper to punish him for his neglect. Quite possibly long association with the Ark had bred in Uzzah a familiarity and loss of respect for it as representative of God; and his open violation of the divine regulation on the highway, and in the sight of the representatives of all Israel, would have brought the divine commands and threatenings respecting the Ark and the various holy things of the Tabernacle into disrespect. The Lord resented this in the interest of his people, and incidentally took the opportunity to teach all Israel, through their representatives there assembled, a great lesson on **[R3253 : page 379]** the propriety of reverence for the Lord and for the particularities of his commands.

The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Whoever has not learned this primary lesson in reverence has not made a proper start in his worship and service. Unless he learns this lesson he is not likely to accomplish anything that will be pleasing to the Lord – he is apt to be a stumbling-block, rather than an assistance in the Lord's service. Indeed, those who are the Lord's consecrated people, and who have been privileged to handle holy things, and to enter into the Most Holy by the blood of Jesus, approaching the throne of the heavenly grace in prayer, have continual need to remember the appropriateness of reverence as they approach the Lord or engage in any service for him. All such should learn from this lesson how they touch holy things, and to do so according to the divine direction and not otherwise. The poet has noticed this tendency of some to "rush in where angels fear to tread." Such irreverence sometimes manifests itself conspicuously in prayer, where the one who should be a worshiper, overflowing with

thanksgiving for mercies received, undertakes to give direction to the great King of kings concerning the management of his work far and near and in all particulars. The Lord does not smite down such today, and make public examples of them for their irreverence, but we may be sure that, as the Apostle says, such petitions will receive no consideration of the Lord. (James 1:7.) A lesson in this matter to us is that obedience is better than sacrifice. The carrying of the Ark upon the shoulders of the four Levites might not have been as majestic a procedure as the one attempted with the cart; it would nevertheless have been more pleasing to the Lord, because it was according to his directions. Let us apply this lesson carefully, and see to it that we not only desire to do the Lord's will, but that we so desire to do it in his way that we will give close attention thereto, hearkening to the statements of his Word, or, as the prophet expresses it, let us be amongst those who tremble at his Word – who are extremely careful to note and particularly follow the Word of the Lord in every matter. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I come to make up my jewels."

To those who discern the Scriptural teaching that death is the cessation of life, and not an entrance into life more abundant, there will be no need to explain that Uzzah's conduct not only justified the Lord in making him an example before the nation, instructing the whole people in reverence, but also that no injury was done to Uzzah's eternal future. He lived before the redemption price had been paid, and before any door to eternal life had been opened. He was one member of the human family for which Christ Jesus our Lord gave his life a ransom. As a consequence, he will be one member of the human family who shall ultimately hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth from the sleep of death – to have it testified to him, in that his "due time," that God has been gracious to our entire race, and has redeemed us with the precious blood. (1 Tim. 2:4-6.) It is to those who have gotten the mistaken idea which ignores the resurrection and claims that there are no dead to be resurrected, but that the dead are more alive than they ever were before, and who,

therefore, think of Uzzah as being dropped immediately into the hands of devils for eternal torture – it is to these that this narrative seems perplexing and unjustly severe. Thank God for the clearer light now shining upon his character and plan!

During the three months that the Ark was at the home of Obed-edom the Lord's blessing was specially with the family, to such a degree that their neighbors took knowledge of it, and the matter eventually reached the attention of the king. We think it not unreasonable to assume that there was something in the character of Obed-edom, and the conduct of his home, in his reverence of the Lord and his confidence in him, that had to do with the blessing accompanying the possession of the Ark; because we have no record of any special blessing coming to the house of Abinadab during the seventy years that the Ark remained there. We might draw a lesson from this applicable to spiritual Israel. The Bible in some respects represents the Lord to us, as the Ark represented him to natural Israel. To it we go for the settlement of our questions. From it we hear the message of the Lord speaking peace to our souls, the forgiveness of sins, etc. The Bible has been in many homes in Christendom for more than seventy years without bringing any special blessing to those homes; yet to some, even in a few months, it [R3253 : page 380] has brought inestimable favors. What is the difference? We reply that very much depends upon the genuineness of the Israelite and the degree of reverence he has for the Lord and his Word, and his carefulness to consult that Word in respect to all his affairs, and the affairs of his home. Those who have the blessing of the Lord's Word, and especially those who have any light upon its pages in this dawning of the Millennial morning, if they are not receiving great blessing from it in their own hearts, peace, joy, comfort, courage, strength, and finding such blessings also upon the members of their households, have reason to inquire to what extent they are responsible for their failure to profit thus.

Hearing of the blessing of the Lord upon the home of Obed-edom, King David took fresh courage, and realized that these different experiences of Uzzah and Obed-edom taught the lesson that those who reverently and carefully sought to know and to do the will of the Lord would have a blessing in proportion to their nearness to him, while the careless and the irreverent only need be in fear. Again the king assembled the representatives of the nation from all quarters, the chief men of the tribe and the chief representatives of the army, etc., and apparently this day of the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem was the most joyful and the most notable day in David's entire experience. See an account of this in 1 Chron. 15, 16. On this occasion care was taken to follow the divine direction, and the Ark was borne on the shoulders of the Levites, frequent stoppages being made, during which sacrifices were offered to the Lord.

On the whole we discern that the Lord's dealing in this matter taught David and all Israel a great lesson, and was very advantageous to the nation as a whole. Thus it is with all the corrections in righteousness which the Lord may at any time give to those who are truly his; rightly received they will bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness, reverence and obedience.

